

The Ammo S



WAR is dangerous enough without adding to it the perils that come from handling, moving and storing munitions. For the American soldiers working ammunition operations in the Kuwaiti desert before the outbreak of war, that meant minimizing risks while receiving and supplying the volatile armaments stockpiled to support the units on the frontlines.

To do that, they rely on people like Daniel Brown, an ammunition logistics assistant from Joint Munitions

Bob Whistine is an Army Materiel Command public affairs officer currently working in Kuwait.

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Command, Rock Island, Ill., whose job title is “Quality Assurance Specialist (Ammunition Surveillance)” or QASAS.

“I make sure the commander in the field has the information he needs to determine what risks are acceptable, based on operational requirements,” Brown said in an

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Story and Photos by Bob Whistine



interview a few weeks before the fighting started. “I want to make sure every soldier who handles ammunition in any way goes home whole and healthy. I see explosives safety as my prime objective.”

The QASAS played many roles in Kuwait, Brown said. “One is to support the forward-deployed units as they set up their ammunition-holding areas and upload their vehicles. I also investigate any malfunctions that might occur.

“My primary objective is to provide the troops on the ground technical advice concerning the storage, deployment, and safety of ammunition and explosives,” Brown said.

Coping with desert heat and sand was only one aspect of munitions operations in Kuwait before the war, Brown said.

(Above, far left) Keith Brailsford, quality-assurance specialist (ammunition surveillance), inspects 7.62mm rounds to determine serviceability.

(Above) Members of Service Battery, 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery, uncrate 155mm rounds destined for the battalion's Paladin self-propelled howitzers.

Early on, commanders faced tougher restrictions because they were technically operating under peacetime regulations.

When field conditions or mission requirements kept commanders from meeting those standards, the QASAS was there to advise them on how to lower risk factors for both soldiers and equipment.

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In Kuwait, as elsewhere, safety was always the first consideration. But before construction on a storage site could begin, commanders had to get approval from the Department of Defense Explosives Safety Board.

Factors such as density of barricades, the net quantities and types of explosives, and the weight of the explosives all had to be considered when planning ammunition-holding areas.

“In Kuwait, QASAS laid out the basic designs for all the AHAs, to minimize the hazard to the troops and equipment,” Brown said.

“The barricades were large mounds of sand. If we have an accident, or an AHA takes a hit from an incoming round,

the barricades must be able to inhibit the explosion of the ammo in adjacent pads,” he explained.

Each type of unit or storage site has its own requirements and risks, Brown said.

“Aviation units with guided missiles operate differently than combat engineers, who use explosive charges to remove obstacles,” Brown said. “The QASAS works with any unit that might have an ammo question or problem, to ensure that their ammunition is safe and serviceable when needed.”

QASASs, who train at the Defense Ammunition Center in McAlester, Okla., have been deployed in every war or conflict since World War II. 🇺🇸



Once rounds are uncrated, they are loaded aboard the waiting Palladins.